



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Aging and Adult Services

2101 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2101
Phone 919-733-3818 Fax 919-715-0023

Michael F. Easley, Governor

Dennis W. Streets, Director
919-733-3983

August 23, 2007

Dear County Director of Social Services:

Subject: Special Assistance In-Home Program Expansion

The Division of Aging and Adult Services (Division) is pleased to announce that the 2007 North Carolina General Assembly acknowledged its support of the State/County Special Assistance In-Home (SA/IH) Program by codifying it in Chapter 108A of the General Statutes. In addition, the SA In-Home Program can now expand up to 15% of the total statewide SA caseload. House Bill 1473 was signed into law by Governor Easley amending Part 3 of Article 2 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes:

The Department of Health and Human Services may use funds from the existing State-County Special Assistance for Adults budget to provide Special Assistance payments to eligible individuals in in-home living arrangements. These payments may be made for up to fifteen percent (15%) of the caseload for all State-County Special Assistance for Adults.....The Department shall make this in-home option available to all counties on a voluntary basis. To the maximum extent possible, the Department shall consider geographic balance in the dispersion of payments to individuals across the State."

The legislation is found at

<http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/House/PDF/H1473v10.pdf> Please see page 84, Section 10.14 a. amending the General Statutes.

*This legislative change immediately increases the slot availability from 1,500 to approximately 3,800. In order to prepare for this increase, we are asking counties to consider their ability to fill and maintain additional SA-IH slots. Currently, 88 county departments of social services are participating in the Program. Counties that have not been able to participate previously are asked to consider offering this valuable Program to their citizens. If you are interested in participating in this Program, please complete the attached Request to Participate form and return it no later than the close of business on **September 21, 2007**.*

If your county is already participating in the SA In-Home Program, you do not need to submit a Request to Participate form to continue your participation with your current slot

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allocation. *However, if you wish to request additional slots please complete the attached Request for Additional SA In-Home Program Slots and return it no later than the close of business **September 13, 2007** to be considered to receive additional slots in October.*

If you would like more information on the Program, the "Special Assistance In-Home Program Report (January 2007)" to the General Assembly is available on the Division's website at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/SAInHomeFinalReport2007.pdf>. This report provides data on the characteristics of the individuals receiving assistance, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, living arrangements, caregiver availability, and service needs. The report also describes how case management is provided and includes a cost analysis of providing SA payments to eligible individuals at home versus an adult care home. Additional SA/IH Program information provided for the general public is found on the Division's website at http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/afs_sa_inhome.htm.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE SA IN-HOME PROGRAM

Client Eligibility Determination

Counties must determine financial eligibility and the client's need for the SA/IH Program. Clients must also be able to live safely at home. The SA In-Home policy manual provides policy information and guidance. . You may access it at the Department of Health and Human Services on-line manuals web site at <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/manuals.aspx?dc=doa> .

Financial eligibility

- Medicaid eligible individuals with incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty level, and who meet all other eligibility criteria for Special Assistance, are financially eligible for Special Assistance payments in in-home living arrangements. The current federal poverty level (FPL) is \$851 and increases each year in April.
- The primary difference between policies for the SA In-Home Program and for SA in an adult care home is the lower income limit and the determination of the payment amount. The income level (need standard) is lower than the income level for individuals receiving Special Assistance in adult care homes. The current SA income level for individuals in adult care homes, effective October 1, 2007, is currently 143% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The General Assembly set the income level for the SA/IH Program at 100% FPL to keep it consistent with the Medicaid income level for those in private living arrangements. Individuals with total countable monthly income between \$851 and \$1,218.50 are not eligible for the SA In-Home payment, but may be eligible for payment in an adult care home.

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Assessment of client need

When an individual applies for Special Assistance, the caseworker will discuss the SA/IH option with her/him and, if interested, refer her/him to the Adult Services case manager for assessment. The case manager will conduct a face-to-face assessment at the applicant's home, using the automated Resident Assessment Instrument-Home Care (RAI-HC) tool. The case manager will also conduct a financial needs assessment. The assessment must indicate that the individual needs care and can live at home safely with appropriate support. Based on the outcome of the assessment, the case manager will authorize or deny the SA/IH payment and communicate that decision to the SA caseworker.

County Cost Participation

Counties participating in the SA/IH Program will use their existing Special Assistance budgets to make SA/IH payments. The Program will not add any cost to the Special Assistance Program. There are costs savings because the SA/IH payment is less than the SA payment for care in an adult care home. For details on the cost analysis, see the Special Assistance In-Home Program Report (January 2007) at

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/SAInHomeFinalReport2007.pdf>

Case Management

- County DSSs that participate in the SA In-Home Program must provide case management for eligible individuals who receive SA In-Home payments. Medicaid At-Risk Case Management and/or SSBG can be used to provide the required case management.
- The RAI-HC will be used by the Adult Services staff to assess SA applicants who need placement in an adult care home, but who prefer to continue living safely at home. The Division will provide RAI-HC software to participating counties. Training will be provided on use of the assessment tool. The case manager authorizes or denies benefits for SA In-Home payments based on the assessment.
- A laptop that meets the specifications for running the RAI-HC assessment software is necessary for the SA In-Home Program. The RAI-HC software requires Access to run. Versions of the RAI-HC software are available that will operate with Access 97, Access 2002, Access 2003, or Office 2007. Because the RAI-HC software was designed to be used on a laptop computer that can be taken to the client's home to conduct the assessment, the original specifications for the software do not allow the software to be run from a network.
- Reports must be submitted by county DSSs to the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

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Training

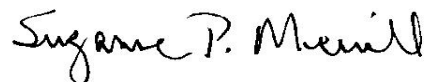
The Division will provide required training for all new counties participating in the SA In-Home Program. Counties currently participating in the Program where staff turnover has occurred or refresher information is needed may elect to attend the training. These day long training sessions conducted at regional locations are for all staff working with the SA In-Home Program, including SA eligibility case workers, social work case managers, and supervisors. It is essential that staff attend a training session. Dates and specifics about these training sessions will be sent to you in separate communication.

The new statutory status of the SA In-Home Program will help to assure counties that slots will likely be available when needed and that the Program can continue to grow. This affirmation of the Program also expands the opportunity for more families to care for their family members in their preferred setting-their homes. While the SA/IH Program provides cost savings as compared to the SA Adult Care Home Program, SA/IH also provides tangible benefits to adults and families. The individuals who receive SA/IH rate their quality of life significantly higher in the areas of feelings/emotions, physical environment, social environment, and community access than those in adult care homes. They also believe that they have more control over their lives.

We look forward to hearing from county DSSs interested in joining the 88 counties currently participating in the SA In-Home Program and from counties who wish to increase their allocation of SA/IH slots.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Chris Urso, Special Assistance Program Administrator, or Brenda Porter, Special Assistance Program Coordinator, at 919-733-3818 or your Adult Programs Representative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne P. Merrill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suzanne P. Merrill, Chief
Adult Services Section

SPM/cu

AFS-14-2007

Attachment

**REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE
IN
THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE (SA) IN-HOME PROGRAM**
(for counties new to the SA In-Home Program)

NOTE: Form may be completed electronically. See Word File Attached to "Dear Director" email.

_____County Department of Social Services requests to begin participation in the SA In-Home Program and will follow the SA In-Home policies and procedures developed by the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS).

As County DSS Director, I, _____, authorize _____ County to participate in the SA In-Home Program and have indicated the number of slots I am requesting

_____ **County Department of Social Services requests**
_____ **(#) slots to begin participation in the SA In-Home Program.**

Date of this Request _____

I designate the following individual as the agency contact for this Program:

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
E-mail address: _____

Please respond to each of the following questions.

1. What is the maximum caseload of SA/In-Home recipients your agency can manage?

2. Who will conduct the assessments using the RAI-HC tool and provide the case management to the individuals receiving SA at home? If you don't know a specific person, please state the unit or position to which this project will be assigned.

3. How will you assure that the appropriate Adult Services, SA, and Adult Medicaid staff will work together to implement this Program?

4. Does the case management staff that you have designated for this Program have basic computer experience and access to a laptop computer equipped with Access software? If not, please explain how the assessments will be conducted?
5. How many of your staff will need training? Will your staff be able to attend a required training session?

Send your responses via email, fax or regular mail, no later than the close of business on **September 21, 2007** to:

Chris.Urso@ncmail.net or to

Chris Urso, Special Assistance Program Administrator
Adult Services Section
NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
2101 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2101
919-733-3818
919-733-715-0023 Fax

**REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SLOTS
FOR COUNTY DSS PARTICIPATING IN THE
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE (SA) IN-HOME PROGRAM**

NOTE: Form may be completed electronically. See Word File Attached to "Dear Director" email

As _____ County DSS Director, I, _____, request DAAS to allocate _____ **(#) new slots**, bringing the number of **total slots to** _____.

_____ County DSS will continue to participate in the SA In-home Program and will follow the SA/IH policies and procedures established by the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

I designate the following individual as the agency contact for this Program:

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
E-mail address _____

Date of this Request _____

Please respond to each of the following questions.

1. Has your agency completed and submitted the SA In-home slot utilization report through July 2007, due August 10, 2007? If not, attach the report to this request. (The report must be submitted electronically.) (http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/doa/saih/adm/SA-IH_Slot_Utilization_Monthly_Report.xls)?
2. Will the same staff continue conducting the assessments using the RAI-HC tool and provide the case management to the increased number of recipients, or will additional staff be assigned? (If you do not know a specific person, please state the unit or position to which this Program will be assigned.)
3. How many of your staff will need training? Will your staff be able to attend a training session?

Send your responses via email, fax or regular mail, no later than the close of business on **September 13, 2007** to:

Chris.Urso@ncmail.net or to

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NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
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This space reserved for additional comments or questions.